



United States Senator
Richard Shelby
REPORTS TO ALABAMA



**THE ERA OF BIG GOVERNMENT IS ALIVE & WELL
AT THE WHITE HOUSE**

With President Clinton's now infamous chant "the era of big government is over" still ringing in our ears, we again find that he has submitted yet another budgetary blueprint for increased domestic spending—spending that includes the creation of new social programs, and the expansion of programs that are already facing serious financial challenges to their survival. If President Clinton's budget submission this week tells us anything it is that "the era of big government" is alive and well at the White House.

What could have been an historic moment for this country, given the first likely budget surplus in many years, is instead a repeat of President Clinton's inability to reduce the size of government and return money to the American people. The President's agenda has never been more clear—use any means available (or expected) to increase the size of government. Budget analysts and economists are predicting a \$100 billion budget surplus. No sooner had the words reached President Clinton's ears than he committed that money to increasing the size of government. It is an unfortunate philosophical mind set that whatever money the government brings in must quickly be spent. Of the expected \$100 billion surplus, President Clinton's FY 1999 budget has committed all but \$9.5 billion in new spending.

The income tax burden on the American people is the highest it's been since 1945. No matter how many people I talk to, there is one thing on which they agree: taxes are too high. Despite this fact, and the fact that we now have the means through which to provide comprehensive tax relief, President Clinton has once again submitted a budget that will only balance if he is allowed to raise taxes, again. That is simply unacceptable. The last thing

the American people need is new federal programs that require even higher taxes to pay for them.

The fact is: we can do much better. We can and must give the American people a balanced budget that has far less spending and far less taxation.

I continue to be concerned about President Clinton's lack of concern for a prepared military and effective defense infrastructure as is evident, yet again, in his latest budget submission. Defense is perhaps the greatest single responsibility of the federal government. After all, if we cannot protect our overseas interests and secure our borders from others, then we certainly will not be in a position to debate how to spend the surplus.

The defense budget is virtually the only part of the federal budget to sustain real cuts and enough is enough. Indeed, cuts from the nation's defense budget have provided the vast majority of deficit reduction which are putting us on the path to balancing the federal budget.

Despite the significant reductions made to all branches of the military over the past several years, this budget provides little of what will be necessary to maintain troops already deployed in peace-keeping missions around the globe—not to mention the inattention these numbers pay to the very serious conflict brewing with Iraq. When adjusted for inflation, the defense budget declines from last year's appropriated level of spending. This is the fourteenth consecutive year of decreased military spending.

The need for a prepared and ready military has never been more important, nor has the need for defense initiatives like a ballistic missile defense system. Just last week, DCI Director George Tenet testified before the Senate Intelligence

Committee about the seriousness of threats against the U. S. from rogue nations around the globe—including the possibility of a ballistic missile attack, threats to our allies in the Gulf and our troops deployed to secure that area.

In addition, morale in our armed forces is low, and it has become increasingly more difficult to recruit and retain quality personnel. We cannot expect strong, intelligent, and motivated young people to continue to put their lives on the line with increasingly little provided to them in return. While we as a nation are enamored with high tech weaponry, we cannot lose sight of the fact that the military is made up of people, individuals who volunteer to protect all of us. Unfortunately, I don't see anything in this budget that will relieve the stress on military personnel and their families.

To date, it is unclear how the Administration's proposal to authorize two more BRAC rounds will unfold in Congress this year. Last year, the Administration proposed additional BRAC rounds, but Congress rejected those proposals because the President turned the apolitical BRAC process into a patronage system. I am opposed to giving President Clinton this authority.

Certainly, this is not the first time my colleagues and I in the Senate and House have received a discouraging budgetary blue print from the Clinton White House. However, what is most important to remember is that we, despite ideological differences with the Clinton Administration, have made significant steps toward not only providing tax relief to the American people, but also reducing the size of government. I believe our success, including the expected budget surplus, is only the beginning. We will not give up this important fight.



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